

In the Claims:

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) ~~The process of claim 1~~ A process for producing controllable yields of a combination of products selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK, said process comprising:  
feeding an oxidation feed to an oxidation reactor to produce an oxidation mixture, the oxidation feed comprising one or more alkylbenzenes selected from the group consisting of (a) a content of s-butylbenzene, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene and cumene at a weight ratio of cumene to s-butylbenzene;  
exposing the oxidation mixture to oxidation conditions effective to produce an oxidation product stream comprising product hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of (a) s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide and cumene hydroperoxide;  
cleaving the product hydroperoxides under cleavage conditions effective to produce a cleavage product comprising a combination selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and MEK, and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK; and,  
separating the cleavage product under separation conditions effective to separate a crude phenol fraction comprising phenol and a crude ketone stream selected from the group consisting of (a) a crude MEK stream and (b) a crude acetone/MEK stream comprising MEK and acetone; and,  
recovering one or more products selected from the group consisting of (a) an MEK product and (b) a combination comprising an MEK product and an acetone product,  
wherein said oxidation conditions comprise feeding said oxidation mixture to a series of continuous oxidation reactors and feeding a source of molecular oxygen to the oxidation mixture.
4. (Original) The process of claim 3 further comprising separating the oxidation product stream under oxidation separation conditions effective to produce an oxidation bottoms (OB) and an oxidation vapor overhead.
5. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the oxidation conditions are effective to produce an oxidation product stream further comprising:  
major byproducts selected from the group consisting of acetophenone, di-methyl benzyl carbinol (DMBA), and ethyl methyl benzyl carbinol (EMBA), and combinations thereof; and

minor by-products selected from the group consisting of di-cumyl peroxide, di-s-butylperoxide, cumyl s-butyl peroxide, formic acid, acetic acid, methanol, ethanol, methyl hydroperoxide, ethyl hydroperoxide, phenol, acetone, and MEK, and combinations thereof.

6. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the weight ratio of cumene to s-butylbenzene is from about 1:8 (or 12.5 wt.% cumene) to about 2:1 (or about 66.7 wt.% cumene).

7. (Currently Amended) ~~The process of claim 4~~ A process for producing controllable yields of a combination of products selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK, said process comprising:

feeding an oxidation feed to an oxidation reactor to produce an oxidation mixture, the oxidation feed comprising one or more alkylbenzenes selected from the group consisting of (a) a content of s-butylbenzene, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene and cumene at a weight ratio of cumene to s-butylbenzene;  
exposing the oxidation mixture to oxidation conditions effective to produce an oxidation product stream comprising product hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of (a) s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide and cumene hydroperoxide;  
cleaving the product hydroperoxides under cleavage conditions effective to produce a cleavage product comprising a combination selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and MEK, and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK; and,  
separating the cleavage product under separation conditions effective to separate a crude phenol fraction comprising phenol and a crude ketone stream selected from the group consisting of (a) a crude MEK stream and (b) a crude acetone/MEK stream comprising MEK and acetone; and,  
recovering one or more products selected from the group consisting of (a) an MEK product and (b) a combination comprising an MEK product and an acetone product,

wherein the oxidation reactor is a batch oxidation reactor and the oxidation conditions comprise:

an oxidation temperature of from about 90 °C to about 150 °C;

an oxidation pressure of from about 0 psig to about 100 psig; and,

an oxidation reaction time of from about 6 to about 11 hours.

8. (Original) The process of claim 7 wherein the oxidation pressure is from about 15 psig to about 40 psig.

9. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the oxidation conditions comprise:

an oxidation temperature of from about 100 °C to about 130 °C.;  
an oxidation pressure of from about 0 psig to about 100 psig; and,  
a total residence time in each continuous reactor of from about 1 to about 5 hours:

10. (Original) The process of claim 9 wherein the oxidation pressure is from about 15 psig to about 40 psig.

11. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the oxidation conditions are effective to produce about 5% or more conversion to the product hydroperoxides.

12. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the oxidation conditions are effective to produce from about 10% to about 30% conversion to the product hydroperoxides.

13. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the oxidation conditions are effective to produce from about 15% to about 25% conversion to the product hydroperoxides.

14. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the series of continuous oxidation reactors comprises from about 3 to about 8 continuous reactors in series.

15. (Original) The process of claim 10 wherein the series of continuous oxidation reactors comprises from about 3 to about 8 continuous reactors in series.

16. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the weight ratio of cumene to s-butyl benzene is 2:1, and the series of continuous oxidation reactors are 4 continuous oxidation reactors in series.

17. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the weight ratio of cumene to s-butylbenzene is 1:8 and the series of continuous oxidation reactors are from 5 to 6 continuous oxidation reactors in series.

18. (Original) The process of claim 4 further comprising cooling the oxidation vapor overhead and the oxidation reaction mixture.

19. (Original) The process of claim 18 wherein said cooling comprises exchanging heat between the oxidation mixture and cooling fluids.

20. (Original) The process of claim 19 further comprising recirculating the oxidation mixture to heat exchangers external to the one or more oxidation reactors.

21. (Original) The process of claim 18 further comprising:

separating the oxidation vapor overhead into an oxidation vapor overhead-organic fraction (OVO-OF) and an oxidation vapor overhead aqueous fraction (OVO-AF);

decomposing the OVO-AF under thermal decomposition conditions effective to decompose ethyl hydroperoxide and methyl hydroperoxide to produce a thermal decomposition product comprising alcohols, aldehydes, carboxylic acids, and combinations thereof, said thermal decomposition conditions

comprising a thermal decomposition temperature of from about 80°C to 250°C. and a thermal decomposition pressure of from about 100 psig to about 200 psig.

22. (Original) The process of claim 18 further comprising separating the oxidation vapor overhead into an oxidation vapor overhead organic fraction ("OVO-OF") and an oxidation vapor overhead aqueous fraction ("OVO-AF");

decomposing the OVO-AF under thermal decomposition conditions effective to decompose ethyl hydroperoxide and methyl hydroperoxide to produce a thermal decomposition product comprising alcohols, aldehydes, carboxylic acids, and combinations thereof, said thermal decomposition conditions comprising adding an OVO-AF inorganic acid to the OVO-AF under conditions effective to accelerate the decomposition and neutralizing the OVO-AF inorganic acid with an OVO-AF alkali base having a pH of from about 10 to about 11; and,

distilling the thermal decomposition product under thermal decomposition product distillation conditions (TDP-distillation conditions) comprising a TDP-distillation temperature effective to remove organic species other than carboxylic acids from the first decomposition product, said TDP-distillation conditions being effective to produce a thermal decomposition product organic distillate and a thermal decomposition product aqueous bottoms.

23. (Original) The process of claim 22 wherein the OVO-AF inorganic acid is selected from the group consisting of sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, and phosphoric acid.

24. (Original) The process of claim 22 wherein the OVO-AF inorganic acid is sulfuric acid.

25. (Original) The process of claim 24 wherein the OVO-AF inorganic acid is added to a concentration of from about 20 ppm to about 100 ppm in the OVO-AF.

26. (Original) The process of claim 25 further comprising neutralizing the OVO-AF inorganic acid with an OVO-AF base selected from the group consisting of sodium carbonate and sodium hydroxide.

27. (Original) The process of claim 4 further comprising feeding the OB and a quantity of water to one or more strippers and exposing the OB to stripping conditions effective to concentrate but ineffective to decompose hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, cumene hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, the stripping conditions being effective to produce a stripper overhead and a stripper bottoms comprising the hydroperoxides, said quantity of water being effective

to produce a first condenser vapor phase comprising a majority of water, ethanol, methanol, methyl hydroperoxide, ethyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, in the first stripper overhead.

28. (Original) The process of claim 27 wherein said quantity of water is equivalent to from about 0.1 wt.% to about 1.5 wt.% of the oxidation bottoms.

29. (Original) The process of claim 6 further comprising feeding the OB and a quantity of water to one or more strippers and exposing the OB to stripping conditions effective to concentrate but ineffective to decompose hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, cumene hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, the stripping conditions being effective to produce a stripper overhead and a stripper bottoms comprising the hydroperoxides, said quantity of water being effective to produce a first condenser vapor phase comprising a majority of water, ethanol, methanol, methyl hydroperoxide, ethyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, in the first stripper overhead.

30. (Original) The process of claim 29 wherein said quantity of water is equivalent to from about 0.1 wt.% to about 1.5 wt.% of the oxidation bottoms.

31. (Original) The process of claim 9 further comprising feeding the OB and a quantity of water to one or more strippers and exposing the OB to stripping conditions effective to concentrate but ineffective to decompose hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, cumene hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, the stripping conditions being effective to produce a stripper overhead and a stripper bottoms comprising the hydroperoxides, said quantity of water being effective to produce a first condenser vapor phase comprising a majority of water, ethanol, methanol, methyl hydroperoxide, ethyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, in the first stripper overhead.

32. (Original) The process of claim 31 wherein said quantity of water is equivalent to from about 0.1 wt.% to about 1.5 wt.% of the oxidation bottoms.

33. (Original) The process of claim 27 wherein the stripper overhead comprises unreacted hydrocarbon, dissolved water, and organic species having a boiling point lower than s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide selected from the group consisting of minor by-products, DMBA, EMBA, acetophenone, and combinations thereof.

34. (Original) The process of claim 33 wherein the stripping conditions comprise a stripper bottoms temperature of about 120 °C or less.

35. (Original) The process of claim 34 further comprising feeding the OB through multiple strippers.

36. (Original) The process of claim 35 wherein the multiple strippers comprise three strippers in series.

37. (Original) The process of claim 36 wherein the stripping conditions comprise first stripper conditions effective to produce a first stripper bottoms and a first stripper overhead comprising a portion of the one or more alkylbenzenes in the OB, second stripper conditions effective to produce a second stripper overhead and a second stripper bottoms, and third stripper conditions effective to produce a third stripper overhead and third stripper bottoms, wherein said stripping conditions comprise a first stripper pressure greater than a second stripper pressure greater than a third stripper pressure.
38. (Original) The process of claim 37 wherein said first stripper pressure is from about 40 to about 60 mm Hg; said second stripper pressure is from about 25 to about 35 mm Hg; and, said third stripper pressure is from about 10 to about 20 mm Hg.
39. (Original) The process of claim 37 wherein said first stripper pressure is about 50 mm Hg; said second stripper pressure is about 30 mm Hg; and, said third stripper pressure is about 15 mm Hg.
40. (Original) The process of claim 37 wherein the first stripper conditions are effective to produce a first stripper overhead comprising:  
99 wt.% or more of the water fed with the OB;  
99 wt.% or more of methanol in the OB;  
99 wt.% or more of ethanol in the OB;  
99 wt.% or more of methyl hydroperoxide in the OB; and,  
99 wt.% or more of ethyl hydroperoxide in the OB.
41. (Original) The process of claim 37 wherein the first stripper conditions are effective to produce a first stripper overhead comprising:  
all water fed with the OB;  
all methanol in the OB;  
all ethanol in the OB;  
all methyl hydroperoxide in the OB;  
all ethyl hydroperoxide in the OB.
42. (Original) The process of claim 37 further comprising exposing the first stripper overhead to first stripper overhead condenser conditions comprising a first stripper overhead condensation temperature and a first stripper overhead condensation pressure, said first stripper overhead condenser conditions being effective to cause a majority of the one or more alkylbenzenes in the first stripper overhead to condense, producing a first condenser organic phase, said first stripper overhead condenser conditions and said

quantity of water also being effective to produce a first condenser vapor phase comprising a majority of water, ethanol, methanol, methyl hydroperoxide, ethyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, in the first stripper overhead.

43. (Original) The process of claim 42 wherein the first condenser organic phase comprises:

about 90 wt.% or more of the s-butylbenzene in the first stripper overhead; and, if present, about 85 wt.% or more of cumene in the first stripper overhead.

44. (Original) The process of claim 43 wherein the first stripper overhead condensation temperature and the first stripper overhead condensation pressure are effective to produce a first condenser vapor phase comprising about 95 wt.% or more of each of the water, the ethanol, the methanol, the methyl hydroperoxide, the ethyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, in the first stripper overhead.

45. (Original) The process of claim 44 further comprising subjecting the first condenser vapor phase to second condensation conditions effective to form a second condenser organic phase and a second condenser aqueous phase comprising a majority of each of the ethanol, the methanol, the methyl hydroperoxide, the ethyl hydroperoxide in the first condenser vapor phase, and combinations thereof.

46. (Original) The process of claim 45 further comprising subjecting the second condenser aqueous phase to said decomposition conditions, producing a decomposition product comprising alcohols, aldehydes, carboxylic acids, and combinations thereof.

47. (Original) The process of claim 37 further comprising recycling greater than about 90 wt.% of the hydrocarbons in the OB to the oxidation mixture.

48. (Currently Amended) ~~The process of claim 4~~ A process for producing controllable yields of a combination of products selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK, said process comprising:

feeding an oxidation feed to an oxidation reactor to produce an oxidation mixture, the oxidation feed comprising one or more alkylbenzenes selected from the group consisting of (a) a content of s-butylbenzene, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene and cumene at a weight ratio of cumene to s-butylbenzene;  
exposing the oxidation mixture to oxidation conditions effective to produce an oxidation product stream comprising product hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of (a) s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide and cumene hydroperoxide;  
cleaving the product hydroperoxides under cleavage conditions effective to produce a cleavage product comprising a combination selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and MEK, and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK; and,

separating the cleavage product under separation conditions effective to separate a crude phenol fraction comprising phenol and a crude ketone stream selected from the group consisting of (a) a crude MEK stream and (b) a crude acetone/MEK stream comprising MEK and acetone; and, recovering one or more products selected from the group consisting of (a) an MEK product and (b) a combination comprising an MEK product and an acetone product,

wherein said cleaving comprises:

feeding a cleavage reaction feed to a cleavage reactor to produce a cleavage reaction mixture comprising the one or more hydroperoxides; and  
subjecting the cleavage reaction mixture to cleavage reaction conditions effective to produce a cleavage reaction product comprising phenol and one or more component selected from the group consisting of methyl ethyl ketone, acetone, and combinations thereof;

wherein the cleavage reaction conditions comprise a cleavage reaction temperature which is sufficiently high to cleave a majority of the one or more hydroperoxides but sufficiently low to produce a first quantity of non-recoverable byproducts from components selected from the group consisting of DMBA, EMBA, and combinations thereof, the first quantity of the non-recoverable by-products being less than a second quantity of the non-recoverable byproducts produced by the same process at a cleavage reaction temperature of 75 °C or higher.

49. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 48 wherein said cleaving further comprises:

feeding to a first cleavage reactor a first cleavage reaction feed comprising at least a portion of the third stripper bottoms and an acid catalyst effective to catalyze the cleavage of hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, cumene hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, the first cleavage reaction conditions being effective to produce a first cleavage reaction mixture comprising a first cleavage reaction product; and,  
feeding the first cleavage reaction product to a second cleavage reactor to produce a second cleavage reaction mixture and subjecting the second cleavage reaction mixture to second cleavage reaction conditions effective to produce a second cleavage reaction product, said second cleavage reaction conditions comprise a second cleavage reaction temperature effective to convert DMBA to  $\alpha$ -methyl styrene (AMS) and to convert EMBA to a compound selected



from the group consisting of  $\alpha$ -ethyl styrene (AES), 2-phenyl-2-butene (2P2B), and combinations thereof.

50. (Original) The process of claim 48 wherein the cleavage reaction feed is a first cleavage reaction feed to a first cleavage reactor, and the cleavage conditions comprise first cleavage reaction conditions effective to produce a first cleavage reaction mixture comprising a first cleavage reaction product, said process further comprising feeding the first cleavage reaction product to a second cleavage reactor to produce a second cleavage reaction mixture and subjecting the second cleavage reaction mixture to second cleavage reaction conditions effective to produce a second cleavage reaction product, said second cleavage reaction conditions comprising a second cleavage reaction temperature effective to convert DMBA to  $\alpha$ -methyl styrene and to convert EMBA to a compound selected from the group consisting of  $\alpha$ -ethyl styrene (AES), 2-phenyl-2-butene (2P2B), and combinations thereof.

51. (Original) The process of claim 49 wherein the first cleavage reactor and the second cleavage reactor are selected from the group consisting of plug-flow reactors (PFR's), plug-flow reactors with recycle (PFRR's), and continuous stirred tank reactors (CSTR's).

52. (Original) The process of claim 49 wherein the first cleavage reactor is a stirred tank reactor comprising internal or external heat exchangers effective to maintain the first cleavage reaction mixture at the first cleavage reaction temperature.

53. (Original) The process of claim 49 wherein the first cleavage reactor is a PFRR comprising one or more heat exchangers effective to maintain the first cleavage reaction mixture at the first cleavage reaction temperature.

54. (Original) The process of claim 49 wherein the first cleavage reaction conditions comprise:

a first cleavage reaction temperature of from about 45°C to about 70°C; and,  
a first cleavage reaction pressure sufficiently high to maintain the first cleavage reaction mixture in the liquid phase.

55. (Original) The process of claim 54 wherein the first cleavage reaction temperature is from about 45°C to about 60°C.

56. (Original) The process of claim 49 wherein the first cleavage reaction conditions comprise

a first cleavage reaction temperature is from about 45°C to about 55°C; and,  
a first cleavage reaction pressure is about 0.5 atmospheres or more.

57. (Original) The process of claim 54 wherein the first cleavage reaction conditions comprise recirculating a recycle flow of the first cleavage reaction mixture through the first cleavage reactor.

58. (Original) The process of claim 57 further comprising withdrawing the first cleavage reaction product from the first cleavage reactor upstream of the first cleavage reactor feed.

59. (Original) The process of claim 57 wherein the recycle flow through the first cleavage reactor is greater than the first cleavage reactor feed flow.

60. (Original) The process of claim 57 wherein the ratio of the recycle flow through the first cleavage reactor compared to the first cleavage reactor feed flow is from about 10:1 to about 100:1 on a weight basis.

61. (Original) The process of claim 57 wherein the ratio of the recycle flow through the first cleavage reactor compared to the first cleavage reactor feed flow is from about 20:1 to 40:1 on a weight basis.

62. (Original) The process of claim 59 wherein the first cleavage reaction conditions comprise a first cleavage reaction residence time effective to cleave:  
about 95% or more of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide in the first cleavage reaction mixture to phenol and MEK; and,  
if present, about 95% or more of cumene hydroperoxide in the first cleavage reaction mixture to phenol and acetone.

63. (Original) The process of claim 61 wherein the first cleavage reaction residence time is from about 1 minute to about 10 minutes.

64. (Original) The process of claim 59 wherein the acid catalyst is selected from the group consisting of sulfuric acid, sulfuric acid anhydride, perchloric acid, phosphoric acid, and combinations thereof.

65. (Original) The process of claim 59 wherein the acid catalyst comprises sulfuric acid.

66. (Original) The process of claim 59 further comprising adding the acid catalyst to a first cleavage reaction mixture side stream at one or more acid addition points and withdrawing the first cleavage reaction mixture side stream between the first cleavage reaction product withdrawal point and the first cleavage reactor feed point.

67. (Original) The process of claim 66 wherein the amount of acid catalyst fed to the first cleavage reactor is from about 0.005% to about 0.1% by weight based on the first cleavage reactor feed flow.

68. (Original) The process of claim 59 wherein the second cleavage reactor comprises a once through plug flow reactor.

69. (Original) The process of claim 67 wherein the second cleavage reactor comprises a once through plug flow reactor.

70. (Original) The process of claim 59 wherein the second cleavage reaction conditions comprise a second cleavage reaction temperature and a second cleavage reaction residence time effective to cleave 95 wt.% or more of the hydroperoxides in the second cleavage reaction mixture.

71. (Original) The process of claim 70 wherein the second cleavage reaction conditions are effective to convert:

75 wt.% or more of DMBA in the first cleavage reaction product to AMS; and  
75 wt.% or more of EMBA in the first cleavage reaction product to a compound selected from the group consisting of AES, 2P2B, and combinations thereof.

72. (Original) The process of claim 70 wherein the second cleavage reaction conditions are effective to convert:

85 wt.% or more of DMBA in the first cleavage reaction product to AMS; and  
85 wt.% or more of EMBA in the first cleavage reaction product to a compound selected from the group consisting of AES, 2P2B, and combinations thereof.

73. (Original) The process of claim 59 wherein the second cleavage reaction conditions comprise:

a second cleavage reaction temperature of from about 60 °C to about 130 °C; and  
a second cleavage reaction pressure which, when combined with the second cleavage reaction temperature, is sufficient to maintain the second cleavage reaction mixture in the liquid phase; and,  
a second cleavage reaction residence time of from about 5 seconds to about 1 minute.

74. (Original) The process of claim 59 wherein  
the second cleavage reaction temperature is from about 70 °C to about 120 °C; and,  
the second cleavage reaction pressure is about 30 psig or more.

75. (Original) The process of claim 71 further comprising taking multiple exotherm measurements to verify the rate of the cleavage reaction.

76. (Original) The process of claim 75 further comprising controlling the amount of acid catalyst added to the first cleavage reaction mixture based on the multiple exotherm measurements.

77. (Original) The process of claim 75 wherein taking the multiple exotherm measurements comprises:

taking a first reaction mixture side stream exotherm measurement;  
taking a first cleavage reactor (FCR) exotherm measurement; and,

taking a second cleavage reactor (SCR) exotherm measurement.

78. (Original) The process of claim 71 further comprising cooling and neutralizing the second cleavage reaction product with an amount of a second cleavage reaction product neutralizing base under second cleavage reaction product neutralization conditions effective to produce a neutralized second cleavage reaction product, the second cleavage reaction product neutralization conditions comprising a second cleavage reaction product neutralization pressure sufficient to maintain the second cleavage reaction product in the liquid phase; and,

separating the neutralized second cleavage reaction product into a neutralized second cleavage reaction product aqueous fraction and a CKC feed comprising a neutralized second cleavage reaction product organic fraction.

79. (Original) The process of claim 78 wherein the second cleavage reaction product neutralization conditions comprise

a temperature of from about 40 °C to about 60 °C; and,

a second cleavage reaction pressure which, when combined with the second cleavage reaction temperature, is sufficient to maintain the second cleavage reaction mixture in the liquid phase.

80. (Original) The process of claim 79 wherein the second cleavage reaction product neutralization temperature is from about 45 °C to about 50 °C.

81. (Original) The process of claim 80 wherein said amount of second cleavage reaction product neutralizing base comprises an amount of alkali base, said amount being effective to maintain the neutralized the second cleavage reaction product aqueous fraction at a pH of from about 5 to about 11.

82. (Original) The process of claim 80 wherein said amount of second cleavage reaction product neutralizing base is effective to maintain the neutralized second cleavage reaction product aqueous fraction at a pH of from about 5 to about 5.5.

83. (Original) The process of claim 80 wherein the second cleavage reaction product neutralizing base comprises an alkali base selected from the group consisting of hydroxides, carbonates, bicarbonates, and phenates of sodium, potassium, and lithium, and combinations thereof.

84. (Original) The process of claim 80 wherein the weight ratio of the CKC feed to the neutralized second cleavage reaction product aqueous fraction is from about 1:3 to about 3:1.

85. (Original) The process of claim 84 further comprising circulating at least part of the neutralized second cleavage reaction product aqueous fraction back to a neutralization apparatus.

86. (Original) The process of claim 84 further comprising maintaining the salt concentration in the neutralized second cleavage reaction product aqueous fraction at from about 1 to about 30% by weight.

87. (Currently Amended) ~~The process of claim 4~~ A process for producing controllable yields of a combination of products selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK, said process comprising:

feeding an oxidation feed to an oxidation reactor to produce an oxidation mixture, the oxidation feed comprising one or more alkylbenzenes selected from the group consisting of (a) a content of s-butylbenzene, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene and cumene at a weight ratio of cumene to s-butylbenzene;  
exposing the oxidation mixture to oxidation conditions effective to produce an oxidation product stream comprising product hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of (a) s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide and cumene hydroperoxide;  
cleaving the product hydroperoxides under cleavage conditions effective to produce a cleavage product comprising a combination selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and MEK, and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK; and,  
separating the cleavage product under separation conditions effective to separate a crude phenol fraction comprising phenol and a crude ketone stream selected from the group consisting of (a) a crude MEK stream and (b) a crude acetone/MEK stream comprising MEK and acetone; and,  
recovering one or more products selected from the group consisting of (a) an MEK product and (b) a combination comprising an MEK product and an acetone product,

further comprising feeding a CKC feed comprising a neutralized organic fraction from said cleavage product to a cleavage product separation zone and exposing the CKC feed to CKC conditions effective to produce  
a crude phenol fraction comprising from about 2 wt.% to about 5 wt.% of a combination of the one or more alkylbenzenes, AMS, AES, and 2P2B; and,  
a CKC vapor distillate comprising most of the water, the one or more alkylbenzenes, AMS, AES, 2P2B, and combinations thereof in the CKC feed.

88. (Original) The process of claim 87 wherein the CKC conditions are effective to produce a CKC vapor distillate comprising 99 wt.% or more of water in the CKC feed and 75% or more of the hydroxy-ketones in the CKC feed.

89. (Original) The process of claim 87 wherein the CKC conditions are effective to produce a CKC vapor distillate comprising all water in the CKC feed.

90. (Original) The process of claim 87 wherein the CKC conditions comprise a CKC top temperature of from about 190°C to about 220°C;  
a CKC top pressure of from about 0 psig to about 10 psig; and,  
a minimum mass reflux ratio of about 0.05/1.

91. (Original) The process of claim 87 wherein the CKC conditions comprise a CKC top temperature of from about 203°C to 207°C;  
a CKC top pressure of from about 3 psig to about 7 psig; and,  
a mass reflux ratio of from about 0.1/1 to about 0.2/1.

92. (Original) The process of claim 87 further comprising  
condensing the CKC vapor distillate to produce a CKC vapor condensate, said  
condensing comprising feeding the CKC vapor distillate to a CKC vapor  
condenser and subjecting the CKC vapor distillate to CKC vapor condenser  
conditions effective to produce the CKC vapor condensate; and,  
exposing the CKC vapor condensate to CKC vapor condensate separation conditions  
effective to produce a CKC vapor condensate organic layer and a CKC vapor  
condensate aqueous layer.

93. (Original) The process of claim 92 further comprising feeding a CKC recycle portion of the CKC vapor condensate aqueous layer to the CKC column at a recycle point.

94. (Original) The process of claim 93 wherein the recycle point is the same tray at which the CKC feed is fed to the CKC column.

95. (Original) The process of claim 94 wherein the CKC recycle portion comprises from about 50 wt.% to 95 wt.% of the CKC vapor condensate aqueous layer.

96. (Original) The process of claim 94 wherein the CKC recycle portion comprises from about 75 wt.% to about 80 wt.% of the CKC vapor condensate aqueous layer.

97. (Original) The process of claim 93 further comprising mixing a remainder of the CKC vapor condensate aqueous layer with the CKC vapor condensate organic layer to form a CKC vapor condensate mixture comprising 2 wt.% phenol or less.

98. (Original) The process of claim 97 wherein the CKC vapor condensate mixture comprises about 1 wt.% phenol or less.

99. (Original) The process of claim 87 further comprising feeding a CKC vapor condensate mixture from said CKC feed comprising 2 wt.% phenol or less to a MEK recovery zone and exposing the CKC vapor condensate mixture to MEK recovery conditions effective to produce a MEK product.

100. (Original) The process of claim 98 further comprising feeding the CKC vapor condensate mixture to a MEK recovery zone and exposing the CKC vapor condensate mixture to MEK recovery conditions effective to produce a MEK product.

101. (Original) The process of claim 100 wherein the MEK recovery conditions comprise  
mixing the CKC vapor condensation mixture with an amount of a MEK recovery alkali base effective to condense a majority of aldehydes in the CKC vapor condensate mixture with MEK and to convert a majority of phenol in the CKC vapor condensate mixture to sodium phenate, thereby producing a MEK recovery mixture; and,  
subjecting the MEK recovery mixture to MEK separation conditions effective to separate a MEK product.

102. (Original) The process of claim 101 wherein the MEK recovery alkali base is sodium hydroxide.

103. (Original) The process of claim 101 wherein the MEK separation conditions comprise  
cooling the MEK recovery mixture to a MEK recovery temperature of from about 35 °C to about 55 °C to produce a cooled MEK recovery mixture; and,  
exposing the cooled MEK recovery mixture to MEK recovery mixture separation conditions effective to separate the cooled MEK recovery mixture into a first MEK aqueous stream and a first MEK organic stream.

104. (Original) The process of claim 103 wherein the MEK recovery temperature is from about 40 °C to about 45 °C.

105. (Original) The process of claim 103 further comprising recirculating the first MEK aqueous stream to the cleavage neutralization apparatus.

106. (Original) The process of claim 103 further comprising  
washing the first MEK organic stream with aqueous alkali base under first MEK organic stream washing conditions effective to remove trace phenol, .  
producing a first washed MEK organic phase;  
washing the first washed MEK organic phase with an aqueous wash under conditions effective to remove trace alkali base and to produce a twice washed MEK organic stream; and,

subjecting the twice washed MEK organic stream to twice washed MEK organic stream separation conditions effective to produce a twice washed MEK aqueous phase and a MDC feed comprising a twice washed MEK organic phase.

107. (Original) The process of claim 103 further comprising decanting the cooled MEK recovery mixture under MEK recovery mixture decanting conditions effective to separate the cooled MEK recovery mixture into a MEK decanter aqueous stream and a MEK decanter organic stream comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, other organic species, dissolved water, and combinations thereof.

108. (Original) The process of claim 107 further comprising recirculating the MEK decanter aqueous stream to the cleavage neutralization apparatus.

109. (Original) The process of claim 107 further comprising  
subjecting the first washed MEK organic stream to first washed MEK organic stream separation conditions effective to produce a first washed MEK aqueous phase and a first washed MEK organic , producing a first washed MEK decanter organic stream;

washing the MEK decanter organic stream with aqueous alkali base under MEK-decanter organic stream washing conditions effective to remove trace phenol;  
separating the first washed MEK decanter organic stream under first washed MEK decanter organic stream separating conditions effective to separate the first washed MEK decanter organic stream into a first washed MEK decanter aqueous phase and a first washed MEK decanter organic phase;

washing the first washed MEK decanter organic phase with an aqueous wash under conditions effective to remove trace alkali base and to produce a twice washed MEK decanter organic stream;

exposing the twice washed MEK decanter organic stream to twice washed MEK decanter organic stream separation conditions effective to produce a twice washed MEK decanter aqueous phase and an MDC feed comprising a twice washed MEK decanter organic phase, the MDC feed comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, water, other organic species, and combinations thereof.

110. (Original) The process of claim 109 further comprising subjecting said MDC feed to MDC conditions effective to produce a MDC overhead comprising water and organic species having a boiling point sufficiently lower than MEK to be separated from the MEK.

111. (Original) The process of claim 110 wherein the MDC conditions comprise a MDC entrainer effective to remove water from the MDC feed.

112. (Original) The process of claim 111 wherein the MDC entrainer is selected from the group consisting of hexane, cyclohexane, heptane, and combinations thereof.



113. (Original) The process of claim 111 wherein the MDC entrainer is cyclohexane.

114. (Original) The process of claim 110 wherein the MDC conditions comprise  
a MDC pressure of from about 3 to about 10 psig;  
a MDC temperature of from about 75 °C to about 90 °C; and,  
a minimum MDC molar reflux ratio of about 5/1 based on the reflux flow to the  
overhead water flow.

115. (Original) The process of claim 110 wherein the MDC conditions comprise  
a MDC pressure of from about 6 to about 7 psig;  
a MDC temperature of from about 80 °C to about 85 °C.; and,  
a MDC molar reflux ratio of from about 10/1 to about 20/1 based on the reflux flow to  
the overhead water flow.

116. (Original) The process of claim 110 further comprising subjecting the MDC  
bottoms to MPC conditions effective to separate the MDC bottoms into a MPC bottoms  
comprising hydrocarbons and organic species having a boiling point higher than MEK and a  
MPC overhead comprising product MEK.

117. (Original) The process of claim 116 wherein the MPC overhead comprises a  
MPC purge stream comprising MEK, the MPC purge stream being effective to purge organic  
species having a boiling point less than MEK from the MPC.

118. (Original) The process of claim 116 wherein the MPC conditions are effective  
to produce MEK product as a side draw from the MPC.

119. (Original) The process of claim 117 wherein the MPC conditions are effective  
to produce MEK product as a side draw from the MPC.

120. (Original) The process of claim 116 wherein the MPC conditions comprise  
a MPC top pressure of from about 0 psig to about 10 psig;  
a MPC top temperature of from about 85 °C to about 101 °C; and,  
a MPC molar reflux ratio, based on reflux flow to MEK product flow, of 0.15 or  
greater.

121. (Original) The process of claim 116 wherein the MPC conditions comprise  
a MPC top pressure of from about 4 psig to about 6 psig;  
a MPC top temperature of from about 92 °C to about 95 °C; and,  
a MPC molar reflux ratio, based on reflux flow to MEK product flow, of greater than  
0.15.

122. (Original) The process of claim 121 wherein the MPC molar reflux ratio is  
from about 0.15 to about 1.

123. (Original) The process of claim 121 wherein the MPC molar reflux ratio is about 1/1.

124. (Currently Amended) ~~The process of claim 4~~ A process for producing controllable yields of a combination of products selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK, said process comprising:

feeding an oxidation feed to an oxidation reactor to produce an oxidation mixture, the oxidation feed comprising one or more alkylbenzenes selected from the group consisting of (a) a content of s-butylbenzene, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene and cumene at a weight ratio of cumene to s-butylbenzene;  
exposing the oxidation mixture to oxidation conditions effective to produce an oxidation product stream comprising product hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of (a) s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide and cumene hydroperoxide;  
cleaving the product hydroperoxides under cleavage conditions effective to produce a cleavage product comprising a combination selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and MEK, and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK; and,  
separating the cleavage product under separation conditions effective to separate a crude phenol fraction comprising phenol and a crude ketone stream selected from the group consisting of (a) a crude MEK stream and (b) a crude acetone/MEK stream comprising MEK and acetone; and,  
recovering one or more products selected from the group consisting of (a) an MEK product and (b) a combination comprising an MEK product and an acetone product,

wherein the acetone/MEK separation conditions comprise feeding the acetone/MEK stream to an Acetone Product Column (APC) as an APC feed and subjecting the APC feed to APC conditions effective to produce an APC product comprising an APC overhead comprising an APC purge stream comprising acetone, said APC product further comprising substantially pure product acetone as a side draw.

125. (Original) The process of claim 87 wherein the acetone/MEK separation conditions comprise feeding the acetone/MEK stream to an Acetone Product Column (APC) as an APC feed and subjecting the APC feed to APC conditions effective to produce an APC product comprising an APC overhead comprising an APC purge stream comprising acetone, said APC product further comprising substantially pure product acetone as a side draw.

126. (Original) The process of claim 125 wherein the CKC conditions are effective to produce an APC feed comprising less than 2 wt.% phenol.

127. (Original) The process of claim 126 wherein the CKC conditions are effective to produce an APC feed comprising from about 14 wt.% to about 45 wt.% acetone and from about 46 wt.% to about 15 wt.% MEK.

128. (Original) The process of claim 125 wherein the oxidation feed comprises from about 15 wt.% to about 30 wt.% cumene, and the CKC conditions are effective to produce an APC feed comprising from about 16 to about 28 wt.% acetone and from about 44 to about 32 wt.% MEK, respectively.

129. (Original) The process of claim 125 further comprising feeding to the first cleavage reactor an amount of a recycle stream effective to reduce the production of non-recoverable by-products from DMBA, EMBA, and a combination thereof, said recycle stream being selected from the group consisting of the MPC purge stream, the APC purge stream, and a combination thereof.

130. (Original) The process of claim 129 wherein said amount of said recycle stream is about 0.1 pound or more of recycle stream per pound of third stripper bottoms.

131. (Original) The process of claim 125 wherein the APC conditions comprise feeding to the APC column an APC base effective to catalyze the condensation of aldehydes in the APC feed with MEK and acetone to produce an APC bottoms comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, APC condensation reaction products, sodium phenate, and combinations thereof; and, subjecting the APC bottoms to MEK separation conditions effective to separate MEK product.

132. (Original) The process of claim 131 wherein the APC base is an alkali base.

133. (Original) The process of claim 131 wherein the APC base is sodium hydroxide.

134. (Original) The process of claim 125 wherein the APC conditions comprise an APC top pressure of from about 400 to about 500 mm Hg; an APC top temperature of from about 30 °C to about 50 °C.; and, a minimum APC molar reflux ratio is about 12/1.

135. (Original) The process of claim 125 wherein the APC conditions comprise an APC top pressure of about 450 mm Hg; an APC top temperature of about 40 °C.; and, an APC molar reflux ratio of from about 15/1 to about 27/1, calculated as rate of reflux flow to side draw product flow on a molar basis.

136. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 135 wherein the APC molar reflux ratio ~~of is~~ about 21/1 or greater, calculated as rate of reflux flow to side draw product flow on a molar basis.

137. (Original) The process of claim 131 wherein the MEK separation conditions comprise

cooling the APC bottoms to a cooled APC bottoms temperature of from about 35 °C to about 55 °C; and,

exposing the cooled APC bottoms to cooled APC bottoms separation conditions effective to produce an APC aqueous stream and an APC organic stream comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, other organic species, dissolved water, and combinations thereof.

138. (Original) The process of claim 137 wherein said cooled APC bottoms temperature is from about 40 °C to about 45 °C.

139. (Original) The process of claim 137 further comprising recycling the APC aqueous stream to the cleavage neutralization apparatus.

140. (Original) The process of claim 137 further comprising washing the APC organic stream with aqueous alkali base under APC organic stream washing conditions effective to remove trace phenol and to produce a first washed APC organic stream;

separating the first washed APC organic stream under first washed APC separation conditions effective to separate the first washed APC organic stream into a first washed APC aqueous phase and a first washed APC organic phase;

washing the first washed APC organic phase with an aqueous wash under conditions effective to remove trace alkali base and to produce a twice washed APC organic stream; and,

separating the twice washed APC organic stream under twice washed APC organic stream separation conditions effective to produce a twice washed APC aqueous phase and a MDC feed comprising a twice washed APC organic phase.

141. (Original) The process of claim 140 wherein the APC organic stream separation conditions are decanter separation conditions.

142. (Original) The process of claim 137 wherein the cooled APC bottoms separation conditions comprise decanting the cooled APC bottoms into an APC decanter aqueous stream and an APC decanter organic stream comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, other organic species, dissolved water, and combinations thereof.

143. (Original) The process of claim 140 wherein the cooled APC bottoms separation conditions comprise decanting the cooled APC bottoms into an APC decanter aqueous stream and an APC decanter organic stream comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, other organic species, dissolved water, and combinations thereof.

144. (Original) The process of claim 143 further comprising recycling the APC decanter aqueous stream to the cleavage neutralization apparatus.

145. (Original) The process of claim 143 further comprising washing the APC decanter organic stream with aqueous alkali base under APC decanter organic stream washing conditions effective to remove trace phenol and to produce a first washed APC decanter organic stream; separating the first washed APC decanter organic stream under first washed APC decanter organic stream separation conditions effective to produce a first washed APC decanter aqueous phase and a first washed APC decanter organic phase.

146. (Currently Amended) ~~The process of claim 1~~ A process for producing controllable yields of a combination of products selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK, said process comprising:

feeding an oxidation feed to an oxidation reactor to produce an oxidation mixture, the oxidation feed comprising one or more alkylbenzenes selected from the group consisting of (a) a content of s-butylbenzene, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene and cumene at a weight ratio of cumene to s-butylbenzene;  
exposing the oxidation mixture to oxidation conditions effective to produce an oxidation product stream comprising product hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of (a) s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, and (b) a combination of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide and cumene hydroperoxide;  
cleaving the product hydroperoxides under cleavage conditions effective to produce a cleavage product comprising a combination selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and MEK, and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK; and,  
separating the cleavage product under separation conditions effective to separate a crude phenol fraction comprising phenol and a crude ketone stream selected from the group consisting of (a) a crude MEK stream and (b) a crude acetone/MEK stream comprising MEK and acetone; and,  
recovering one or more products selected from the group consisting of (a) an MEK product and (b) a combination comprising an MEK product and an acetone product,

wherein said oxidation mixture further comprises an amount of oxidation base effective to increase production of said product hydroperoxide and decrease production of byproducts from components selected from the group consisting of AP, DMBA, EMBA, and combinations thereof, said oxidation base

comprising a quantity of water insufficient to create a separate aqueous phase.

147. (Original) The process of claim 146 wherein said oxidation base is selected from the group consisting of alkali bases, anhydrous ammonia, and aqueous ammonia.

148. (Original) The process of claim 146 wherein said alkali base is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal carbonates and alkali metal bicarbonates.

149. (Original) The process of claim 146 wherein said oxidation base is aqueous ammonia comprising an amount of water effective to increase neutralization of acids formed during the oxidation by the oxidation base.

150. (Original) The process of claim 146 wherein said amount of water is from about 400 ppm to about 2 wt. %.

151. (Original) The process of claim 146 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

152. (Original) The process of claim 146 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids of from about 0.5:1 to about 4:1.

153. (Original) The process of claim 149 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

154. (Original) The process of claim 150 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

155. (Original) The process of claim 150 wherein said amount of base is sufficient to produce a ratio of neutralizing base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0.5:1 to about 4:1.

156. (Previously Presented) A process for producing controllable yields of a combination of products selected from the group consisting of (a) phenol and MEK, and (b) phenol, acetone, and MEK, said process comprising:

feeding an oxidation feed to a series of continuous oxidation reactors to produce an oxidation mixture and feeding a source of molecular oxygen to the oxidation mixture, the oxidation feed comprising one or more alkylbenzenes selected from the group consisting of (a) a content of s-butylbenzene (b) a combination comprising s-butylbenzene and cumene at a cumene:s-butylbenzene ratio; exposing the oxidation mixture to oxidation conditions effective to produce an oxidation product stream comprising product hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of (a) s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, and (b) a combination comprising s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide and cumene hydroperoxide;

separating the oxidation product stream under oxidation separation conditions effective to produce an OB and an oxidation vapor overhead;

feeding the OB and a quantity of water to one or more strippers and exposing the OB to stripping conditions effective to concentrate but ineffective to decompose said product hydroperoxides, the stripping conditions being effective to produce a stripper overhead and a stripper bottoms comprising the hydroperoxides, said quantity of water being effective to produce a first condenser vapor phase comprising a majority of water, ethanol, methanol, methyl hydroperoxide, ethyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, in the first stripper overhead;

wherein the stripping conditions comprise

- first stripper conditions effective to produce a first stripper bottoms and a first stripper overhead comprising a portion of the one or more alkylbenzenes;
- second stripper conditions effective to produce a second stripper overhead and a second stripper bottoms, and
- third stripper conditions effective to produce a third stripper overhead and third stripper bottoms,

wherein said stripping conditions comprise a first stripper pressure greater than a second stripper pressure greater than a third stripper pressure;

exposing the first stripper overhead to first stripper overhead condenser conditions comprising a first stripper overhead condensation temperature and a first stripper overhead condensation pressure, said first stripper overhead condenser conditions being effective to cause a majority of the one or more alkylbenzenes in the first stripper overhead to condense, producing a first condenser organic phase, said first stripper overhead condenser conditions and said quantity of water also being effective to produce a first condenser vapor phase comprising a majority of water, ethanol, methanol, methyl hydroperoxide, ethyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, in the first stripper overhead;

separating the first condenser vapor phase from the first condenser organic phase;

subjecting the first condenser vapor phase to second condensation conditions effective to form a second condenser organic phase and a second condenser aqueous phase comprising a majority of each of the ethanol, the methanol, the methyl hydroperoxide, the ethyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof in the first condenser vapor phase;

decomposing the second condenser aqueous phase under thermal decomposition conditions effective to decompose hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of ethyl hydroperoxide, methyl hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof, to produce a thermal decomposition product comprising alcohols, aldehydes, carboxylic acids, and combinations thereof, said thermal decomposition conditions comprising a thermal decomposition temperature of from about 80°C to 250°C and a thermal decomposition pressure of from about 100 psig to about 200 psig;

feeding to a first cleavage reactor at least a portion of the third stripper bottoms and an acid catalyst to produce a first cleavage reaction mixture, said acid catalyst being effective to catalyze the cleavage of hydroperoxides selected from the group consisting of s-butylbenzene hydroperoxide, cumene hydroperoxide, and combinations thereof,

exposing the first cleavage reaction mixture to first cleavage reaction conditions effective to produce a first cleavage reaction product, said first cleavage reaction conditions comprising a first cleavage reaction temperature of from about 45°C to about 70°C, a first cleavage reaction pressure sufficiently high to maintain the first cleavage reaction mixture in the liquid phase, and a first cleavage reaction residence time of from about 1 to about 10 minutes;

subjecting the first cleavage reaction product to second cleavage reaction conditions effective to produce a second cleavage reaction product, said second cleavage reaction conditions comprising a second cleavage reaction temperature of from about 60 °C to about 130 °C, a second cleavage reaction pressure sufficient to maintain the second cleavage reaction mixture in the liquid phase, and a first cleavage reaction residence time of from about 5 seconds to about 1 minute;

cooling and neutralizing the second cleavage reaction product with a second cleavage reaction product neutralizing base under second cleavage reaction product neutralization conditions effective to produce a neutralized second cleavage reaction product, said second cleavage reaction product neutralization conditions comprising a second cleavage reaction product neutralization pressure sufficient to maintain the second cleavage reaction product in the liquid phase; and,

separating the neutralized second cleavage reaction product into a neutralized second cleavage reaction product aqueous fraction and a CKC feed comprising a neutralized second cleavage reaction product organic fraction;



feeding the CKC feed to a Crude Ketone Column (CKC) and exposing the CKC feed to CKC conditions effective to produce a crude phenol fraction comprising from about 2 wt.% to about 5 wt.% of the one or more alkylbenzenes, AMS, AES, 2P2B, and a CKC vapor distillate comprising most of the one or more alkylbenzenes, water, AMS, AES, 2P2B, and combinations thereof in the CKC feed;

condensing the CKC vapor distillate to produce a CKC vapor condensate, said condensing comprising feeding the CKC vapor distillate to a CKC vapor condenser and subjecting the CKC vapor distillate to CKC vapor condenser conditions effective to produce the CKC vapor condensate; and,

exposing the CKC vapor condensate to CKC vapor condensate separation conditions effective to produce a CKC vapor condensate organic layer and a CKC vapor condensate aqueous layer;

feeding a CKC recycle portion of the CKC vapor condensate aqueous layer to the CKC column at a recycle point;

mixing a remainder of the CKC vapor condensate aqueous layer with the CKC vapor condensate organic layer to form a CKC vapor condensate mixture comprising 2 wt.% phenol or less;

recovering a product selected from the group consisting of (a) a MEK product and (b) a combination comprising a MEK product and an acetone product.

157. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 156 said recovering a product comprises recovering a MEK product, said process further comprising:

mixing the CKC vapor condensate mixture with an amount of a MEK recovery alkali base effective to condense a majority of aldehydes in the CKC vapor condensate mixture with MEK and to convert a majority of phenol in the CKC vapor condensate to sodium phenate, thereby producing a MEK recovery mixture; and,

cooling the MEK recovery mixture to a MEK recovery temperature of from about 35 °C to about 55 °C to produce a cooled MEK recovery mixture;

decanting the cooled MEK recovery mixture under MEK recovery mixture decanting conditions effective to separate the cooled MEK recovery mixture into a MEK decanter aqueous stream and a MEK decanter organic stream comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, other organic species, dissolved water, and combinations thereof;

washing the MEK decanter organic stream with aqueous alkali base under MEK decanter organic stream washing conditions effective to remove trace phenol, producing a first washed MEK decanter organic stream;

separating the first washed MEK decanter organic stream under first washed MEK decanter organic stream separating conditions effective to separate the first washed MEK decanter organic stream into a first washed MEK decanter aqueous phase and a first washed MEK decanter organic stream;

washing the first washed MEK decanter organic stream with an aqueous wash under conditions effective to remove trace alkali base and to produce a twice washed MEK decanter organic stream;

exposing the twice washed MEK decanter organic stream to twice washed MEK decanter organic phase separation conditions effective to produce a twice washed MEK decanter aqueous phase and a MDC feed comprising a twice washed MEK decanter organic phase comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, water, other organic species, and combinations thereof;

subjecting the MDC feed to MDC conditions effective to produce a MDC overhead comprising water and organic species having a boiling point sufficiently lower than MEK to be separated from the MEK, and a MDC bottoms comprising MEK hydrocarbon, and organic species having a boiling point the same as or greater than MEK;

subjecting the MDC bottoms to MPC conditions effective to separate the MDC bottoms into a MPC bottoms comprising hydrocarbons and organic species having a boiling point higher than MEK and a MPC overhead comprising an MPC purge stream comprising MEK, said MPC conditions also being effective to produce MEK product as a side draw from the MPC.

158. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 156 wherein said recovering a product comprises recovering a MEK product and an acetone product, said process further comprising:

feeding the CKC vapor condensate mixture to an Acetone Product Column (APC) as an APC feed and subjecting the APC feed to APC conditions effective to produce an APC product comprising an APC overhead comprising an APC purge stream comprising acetone, said APC product further comprising substantially pure product acetone as a side draw;

wherein the APC conditions comprise:

feeding to the APC column an APC base effective to catalyze the condensation of aldehydes in the APC feed with MEK and acetone to produce an APC bottoms comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, APC condensation reaction products, sodium phenate, and combinations thereof; and,

subjecting the APC bottoms to MEK separation conditions effective to separate MEK product.

159. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 158 wherein the MEK separation conditions comprise:

cooling the APC bottoms to a temperature of from about 35 °C to about 55 °C;  
exposing the cooled APC bottoms to APC separation conditions effective to produce a first APC aqueous stream and a first APC organic stream comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, other organic species, dissolved water, and combinations thereof;  
washing the first APC organic stream with aqueous alkali base under first APC organic stream washing conditions effective to remove trace phenol and to produce a first washed APC organic stream;  
exposing the first washed APC organic stream to first washed APC organic stream separation conditions effective to produce a first washed APC aqueous phase and a first washed APC organic phase;  
washing the first washed APC organic phase with an aqueous wash under conditions effective to remove trace alkali base and to produce a twice washed APC organic stream; and,  
separating the twice washed APC organic stream under twice washed APC organic stream separation conditions effective to produce a MDC feed comprising a twice washed APC organic phase and a twice washed APC aqueous phase.

160. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 158 wherein the MEK separation conditions comprise:

cooling the APC bottoms to a temperature of from about 35 °C to about 55 °C;  
decanting the cooled APC bottoms into a cooled APC decanter aqueous stream and a cooled APC decanter organic stream comprising MEK, hydrocarbon, other organic species, dissolved water, and combinations thereof;  
washing the cooled APC decanter organic stream with aqueous alkali base under APC decanter organic stream washing conditions effective to remove trace phenol and to produce a first washed APC decanter organic stream; and,  
exposing the first washed APC decanter organic stream to APC decanter organic stream separation conditions effective to produce a first washed APC decanter aqueous phase and a first washed APC decanter organic phase.

161. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 156 further comprising feeding to a first cleavage reactor an amount of a recycle stream effective to reduce the production of non-recoverable by-products from DMBA, EMBA, and a combination thereof, said recycle stream being selected from the group consisting of the MPC purge stream, the APC purge stream, and a combination thereof.

162. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 157 further comprising feeding to the first cleavage reactor an amount of a recycle stream effective to reduce the production of non-recoverable by-products from DMBA, EMBA, and a combination thereof, said recycle stream being selected from the group consisting of the MPC purge stream, the APC purge stream, and a combination thereof.

163. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 158 further comprising feeding to the first cleavage reactor an amount of a recycle stream effective to reduce the production of non-recoverable by-products from DMBA, EMBA, and a combination thereof, said recycle stream being selected from the group consisting of the MPC purge stream, the APC purge stream, and a combination thereof.

164. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 159 further comprising feeding to the first cleavage reactor an amount of a recycle stream effective to reduce the production of non-recoverable by-products from DMBA, EMBA, and a combination thereof, said recycle stream being selected from the group consisting of the MPC purge stream, the APC purge stream, and a combination thereof.

165. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 160 further comprising feeding to the first cleavage reactor an amount of a recycle stream effective to reduce the production of non-recoverable by-products from DMBA, EMBA, and a combination thereof, said recycle stream being selected from the group consisting of the MPC purge stream, the APC purge stream, and a combination thereof.

166. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 156 wherein the MDC conditions comprise a MDC entrainer effective to remove water from the MDC feed.

167. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 166 wherein the MDC entrainer is selected from the group consisting of hexane, cyclohexane, heptane, and combinations thereof.

168. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 166 wherein the MDC entrainer is cyclohexane.

169. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 165 wherein the MDC conditions comprise a MDC entrainer effective to remove water from the MDC feed.

170. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 169 wherein the MDC entrainer is selected from the group consisting of hexane, cyclohexane, heptane, and combinations thereof.

171. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 169 wherein the MDC entrainer is cyclohexane.

172. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 156 wherein said oxidation mixture further comprises an amount of oxidation base effective to increase production of said product hydroperoxide and decrease production of byproducts from components

selected from the group consisting of AP, DMBA, EMBA, and combinations thereof, said oxidation base comprising a quantity of water insufficient to create a separate aqueous phase.

173. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 172 wherein said oxidation base is selected from the group consisting of alkali bases, anhydrous ammonia, and aqueous ammonia.

174. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 173 wherein said alkali base is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal carbonates and alkali metal bicarbonate

175. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 172 wherein said oxidation base is aqueous ammonia comprising an amount of water effective to increase neutralization of acids formed during the oxidation by the oxidation base.

176. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 172 wherein said amount of water is from about 400 ppm to about 2 wt. %.

177. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 172 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

178. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 172 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids of from about 0.5:1 to about 4:1.

179. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 175 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

180. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 176 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

181. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 176 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0.5:1 to about 4:1.

182. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 171 wherein said oxidation mixture further comprises an amount of oxidation base effective to increase production of said product hydroperoxide and decrease production of byproducts from components selected from the group consisting of AP, DMBA, EMBA, and combinations thereof, said neutralizing base comprising a quantity of water insufficient to create a separate aqueous phase.

183. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 182 wherein said oxidation base is selected from the group consisting of alkali bases, anhydrous ammonia, and aqueous ammonia.

184. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 183 wherein said alkali base is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal carbonates and alkali metal bicarbonate

185. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 183 wherein said oxidation base is aqueous ammonia comprising an amount of water effective to increase neutralization of acids formed during the oxidation by the oxidation base.

186. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 182 wherein said amount of water is from about 400 ppm to about 2 wt.%.

187. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 182 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

188. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 182 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids of from about 0.5:1 to about 4:1.

189. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 186 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

190. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 187 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0:1 to about 6:1.

191. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 187 wherein said amount of oxidation base is sufficient to produce a ratio of base to acids formed under said oxidation conditions of from about 0.5:1 to about 4:1.

192. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 156 wherein said oxidation separation conditions comprise washing said oxidation product stream under oxidation product washing conditions effective to remove salts formed in the oxidation and to produce said first condenser vapor phase.

193. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 191 wherein said oxidation separation conditions comprise washing said oxidation product stream under oxidation product washing conditions effective to remove salts formed in the oxidation and to produce said first condenser vapor phase.

194. (Cancelled)

195. (Cancelled)